

Writing Arguments to Support Claims Grades 9-12

An argument is a "claim" that must be supported by evidence. When writing argument, students are required to do more than summarize material or repeat what has already been said. One strategy for advancing an argument is to anticipate and address counterarguments or oppositions. By developing counterclaims, the writer discredits the counter argument and thereby invalidates reasons the reader might have for not accepting the writer's argument.

| Persuasion | Argument |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempts to convince the reader to accept a thesis as truth. Provides facts and evidence to support the thesis. Appeals to the credibility, character, or authority of the writer. Is often grounded more in <i>feelings</i> or "pathos" rather than in facts. Is often associated with speeches and frequently requires listeners/ readers to take some sort of action to remediate an issue. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempts to convince the reader to accept a claim as truth. Introduces precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establishes the significance of the claim(s), distinguishes the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and creates an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases. Uses words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.. Establishes and maintains a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing. Provides a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented. |

Types of Evidence

The type of evidence writers use to support a claim related to a literary topic may differ from the types of evidence students will need to support a claim related to history, mathematics, science, or other subject.

Critical Reading

Critical reading is a major part of understanding argument. Readers must do *more* than read material. Critical reading requires the reader to interact with the text, questioning and examining what the author is saying

Related Vocabulary

Analyze means to examine, closely study, and evaluate a text by breaking down and examining its elements to comprehend its meaning.

Bias is a general tendency or leaning in one direction; a partiality toward one view over another.

Claim is a statement that clearly introduces an idea or belief that is supported by evidence

Counterclaim/opposing claim is an argument that negates the writer's claim.

Evidence is something that gives a sign or proof of the existence or truth of something, or that helps somebody to come to a particular conclusion.

Formal style is writing that is free of slang, trite expressions, abbreviations, symbols, email shortcut language, contractions, and the use of the personal pronoun "I." The writer does not speaking directly to the reader by using the word *you*. Formal style ensures that readers are able to read and understand what is written.

Organization structure/patterns are the way facts and details are arranged in a text that help the reader understand the text (*i.e., cause/effect, problem/solution*).

Peripheral information is text information that is not of central importance.

Primary source is an original source, such as someone's diary or journal, a survey or interview, letters, autobiographies, and observation.

Secondary source is material that other people have gathered and interpreted, extended, analyzed, or evaluated, such as newspaper articles, a documentary on television, a website, a science text, and an encyclopedia entry.

Synthesize means to examine, closely study, and evaluate how individual text elements work together as a whole by combining the knowledge of one text element to the analysis of an additional element.

Tertiary source is a term used for information that has been compiled from both primary and secondary sources.

Tone is an author's attitude toward a subject.

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Responding to Literary Texts

Sample Writing Tasks

Directions: After reading the text, complete the following assignment.

- Make a decision to support or refute the claim
- Locate textual evidence to develop your claim
- Develop claims and counterclaims fairly with strong evidence from the text
- Explain the limitation of claims and counterclaims
- Provide a concluding statement/paragraph that follows from and supports your claim.

Text: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Claim: *The Youngers are not able to accomplish their dreams because of their character flaws, not because of their social status.*

Text: *The Great Gatsby*

Claim: *Fitzgerald's novel defines the American dream as a nightmare and not as a dream.*

Text: *The Catcher in the Rye*

Claim: *Martha and George are two people who co-exist as a couple but lack feelings of genuine love for one another.*

Text: *The Stranger*

Claim: *Though not a demonstrative person, Meursault is capable of giving and receiving love.*



*"Argument literacy is fundamental to being educated..." Gerald Graff, 2003
(Common Core, Appendix A)*

Responding to Non-fiction Texts

Sample Writing Tasks

Existentialism

Locate and read (2) primary and (4) secondary or tertiary sources that provide evidence to support or refute the claim that *Existentialism's literary value rests more with those who enjoy the theater than with those who appreciate literature*. Use evidence to support your claim, and be certain to address and discredit counterclaims. Provide a concluding statement/paragraph that follows from and supports your claim.

Complete the following tasks.

Who Cares?

- Select and read two essays located in the "For Your Viewing" station
- Select and study closely the text and graphics for two of the cartoons located in the "More than a Smile" station
- Select and listen to two Podcasts located in the "For Your Hearing" station
- Select and play one of the three videos located in the "For Your Listening and Hearing" station

Based on the essays you read, the recordings you heard, the video you watched, and the cartoons you studied, develop an argument that addresses the extent to what compassion plays in the development of one's personal character. Use evidence from at least three different types of sources to support your claim, and be certain to address and discredit counterclaims. Provide a concluding statement/paragraph that follows from and supports your claim.